AFRICA RENEWAL

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Sierra Leone war crimes

Women speak out against sexual violence

By Nirit Ben-Ari and Ernest Harsch

In 1991, at the very beginning of Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, a 19-year-old woman crossed paths with a group of 10 rebels, led by the notorious commander "Mosquito," just outside the town of Telu Bongor. "Mosquito was the first person who raped me," she later recounted. "Then he ordered his men to continue the act. Nine other men continued to rape me. . . . After misusing me to their satisfaction, the rebels left me alone in a very hopeless condition. . . . Even now the pain is still in me, which is creating problems in my marital home, because my husband drives me from my home and says that I am barren."

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AFRICA RENEWAL

United Nations
Vol. 18 No. 4 January 2005

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Darfur crisis challenges Africa, world

A complex conflict brings mixed responses

By **Itai Madamombe**

Despite ceasefire agreements between the Sudanese government and two rebel groups in that country's western Darfur region, fighting again erupted in November, posing a serious challenge to African and international efforts to find a peaceful solution. "Chaos is looming as order is collapsing," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned in December. "Unfortunately, the optimism generated on the political front was overshadowed by regression in the security situation."

Peace talks, which marked further progress in early November, were marred two weeks later by new fighting, when one of the rebel groups briefly seized the town of Tawilla and killed nearly 30 government police officers. The government quickly regained control by driving out the rebels with aerial bombardments.

The war in Darfur erupted in February 2003 after years of skirmishes over land and water between ethnic groups that identify themselves mainly as "African" or "Arab." The two main rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement, accused the central government in Khartoum of supporting Arab pastoralists in their disputes with African farmers. Most observers have blamed the Sudanese armed forces and a pro-government militia, known as the Janjaweed, for most of the atrocities in the war, including killing and raping civilians and destroying homes, wells and crops.

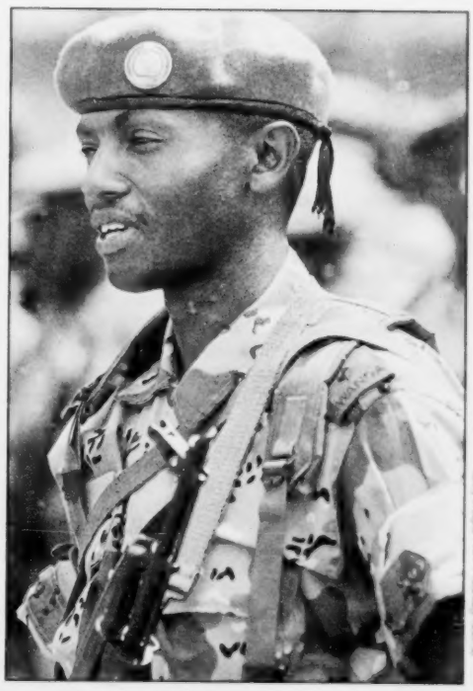
The conflict has already left tens of thousands of people dead. Some 2.3 million require emergency assistance, including an estimated 1.65 million who have been uprooted from their homes.

In a December report to the UN Security Council, Mr. Annan warned that insecurity will persist if the government fails to take the necessary first step of disarming the Janjaweed militia, as the Council demanded in September.

In response, Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail said his government had made "relentless efforts" to meet its obligations to the UN. He reported that the Sudanese authorities have convicted 12 Janjaweed militia members and sentenced three to death, donated large amounts of food relief, dramatically stepped up access to hospitals and health centres across Darfur and taken part in ongoing peace talks in Nigeria with the two rebel groups.

African leadership

The Darfur crisis has been widely debated within the UN and among other international organizations and human rights groups. But the African Union (AU), the continent's most authoritative political body, has taken on the main responsibility for facilitating a solution. It has done so both by sponsoring peace talks and by fielding a modest peacekeeping mission to monitor the agreements.



A Rwandan soldier in the African Union's Darfur peacekeeping force: a challenge for the AU.

The first AU-mediated ceasefire agreement was signed in Ndjamena, Chad, in April. However, the rebel movements initially refused to sign the negotiated protocols on improving the security and humanitarian situations until agreement on other issues had been reached. Finally, at the AU's urging, they and the government signed the protocols in early November in Abuja, Nigeria.

On the ground, the AU is also leading international efforts to boost security. It has pledged to send a total of 3,300 troops, and possibly up to 5,000. As of December, the AU's African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) had in place just over 100 military observers, protected by about 800 troops. The mission has made some modest contributions, including presiding over prisoner exchanges and recovering stolen aid vehicles.

"The AU is doing its best," Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, chairperson of the organization's executive Commission, said in December in response to accusations by human rights groups that it should be doing more. "While it's true that there are difficulties in rapidly deploying men on the ground, we are there and we are helping."

African political analysts point out that the Darfur crisis poses a notable challenge to the continental body. If it cannot help restore peace in Sudan, "We will take a long time to recover our credibility," a senior AU political officer, Mr. Jean-Baptiste Natama, told the *Sudan Tribune* in November.

"Darfur is a critical test for the AU," Mr. Adam Thiam, a spokesman for the organization, agrees. But he adds that it will be "an even bigger test for the AU's

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Africans push to tame malaria

But funding shortages and drug resistance hamper control efforts

By **Itai Madamombe**

The Ugandan government announced in October that it would distribute 4.5 mn free insecticide-treated bed nets to protect children and pregnant women from malaria, thereby boosting the East African country's efforts to conquer the mosquito-borne disease. According to Mr. John Bosco Rwakimari, head of the Ugandan Health Ministry's malaria-control programme, the treated net has several benefits: it works as a barrier between the body and the mosquito, it repels mosquitoes and it kills those that land on it.

Getty Images AFP/Georges Gobet

Mother with malaria-stricken child in Liberia. Wars have disrupted antimalaria programmes.

"Our target is the country's entire 5 million households," explains Mr. Rwakimari. "But the funds we have got are inadequate." Currently, there is enough money to supply 2 million households with bed nets. Through the initiative, made possible by a $6 mn grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Uganda will also mobilize community members to help implement the programme.

Worldwide, there are at least 300 mn acute cases of malaria each year, resulting in more than a million deaths. Around 90 per cent of these deaths occur in Africa, mostly among young children. In Uganda, malaria is the leading cause of death among children under five years old.

Funding needs

In November, the Global Fund called for a fifth round of proposal submissions, renewing optimism that African countries would be able to strengthen their malaria-control efforts. The call, made during a board meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, came despite pressure for a postponement. The fund is suffering an overall financial shortfall, and the US, its largest contributor, was reluctant to endorse a further round of fund-raising, arguing that other donors have not been meeting their pledges.

The fund is a global public-private partnership dedicated to attracting and disbursing additional resources to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis worldwide. Since it was created in January 2002, it has committed about $3 bn in two-year grants to 128 countries. Roughly 56 per cent of that amount has been committed to fighting HIV/AIDS, 31 per cent to malaria and the rest to tuberculosis.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that international funding for malaria prevention and control must be up to $2.5 bn a year to save the millions of lives lost to this preventable disease — far below the amount currently reaching antimalaria programmes. "To sustain impact, funding must not be sparse and sporadic, but adequate with long-term focus to meet not only the immediate targets but also to meet the Millennium Development Goals and beyond," WHO said in September.

Devastating impact

Malaria is estimated to cost Africa more than $12 bn every year in lost gross domestic product, even though the disease could be controlled for a fraction of that sum. "One cannot overstate the devastating consequences of malaria on economic development," says Mr. Jeffrey Sachs, a leading international economist and special adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals.

Work productivity suffers due to illness, absenteeism and premature death. That in turn deters business investors, both local and foreign. Tourism suffers due to travelers' unwillingness to visit malaria-stricken countries. Malaria also reduces the accumulation of human capital by hindering child health, school attendance, performance and cognitive development.

In heavily hit countries, malaria may account for as much as 40 per cent of public health expenditures. Households bear most of the cost of purchasing insecticides, mosquito nets and antimalarial drugs. These private expenditures are greater than donor support, and more than twice what governments spend on malaria prevention and treatment, WHO points out.

A host of obstacles

A combination of factors makes it difficult for Africa to tame malaria. Most infections in sub-Saharan Africa are caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*, the most severe and life-threatening form of the disease. This region is also home to the most aggressive species of mosquitoes, making transmission rates in the region much higher than anywhere else. In addition, political and social upheavals disrupt antimalaria campaigns and often

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Small steps can make a big difference

Achieving Millennium goals requires "practical investments"

UN / Michele Tobin

The "Global Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals" will be presented to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on 17 January 2005. The report, developed over two years by a team of 300 economists and researchers headed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Adviser on the MDGs, Professor Jeffrey Sachs (left), will, in his words, take the "aspirational" MDGs and attempt to make them "operational." The report can be found online at: http://www.unmillenniumproject.org

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include halving world poverty and slashing child mortality by two-thirds, are as challenging as they are ambitious, Mr. Sachs said at UN headquarters in New York in late September, in briefings on the work of the Millennium Project, which he directs. But meeting those goals, said Mr. Sachs, can be as simple as distributing a $1.50 mosquito net or providing a family farmer with a sack of fertilizer. "These are not metaphysical problems. These are not grand cultural problems. . . . These are practical problems, and they don't cost very much money."

Mr. Sachs asserted that while substantial progress has been made in some regions of the world, "Africa on the whole has not achieved progress and has experienced significant regress in many areas." The continent is the epicentre of global poverty, he continued. World leaders are slated to review progress towards the goals in September 2005.

The reasons for Africa's halting progress are numerous, he said, including poor soils, the effects of climate change and shortages of basic transportation and communications. But these problems have been worsened by the donor community's insistence on market mechanisms, inadequate and poorly targeted aid and a tendency to blame Africa. The continent's problems "cannot be folded under the rubric that poor Africa just doesn't govern itself properly," Mr. Sachs observed. "Blaming the poor will not solve the problem. Nor is it an accurate, analytical picture" of the obstacles to Africa's development.

Nitrogen deficiency is a major impediment to improving crop yields in Africa, he said, yet structural adjustment policies eliminated government fertilizer subsidies and raised fertilizer prices beyond the means of Africa's poor — and mostly female — farmers. "We are sending hundreds of millions of Africans out to farm their fields today with no biophysical chance of growing a crop — and when the crop fails we send a mission from someplace to tell them to govern better."

Similar problems are hampering the drive against malaria (see page 4), with donors insisting that Africans purchase insecticide-treated mosquito nets under a private-sector approach known as "social marketing." Less than 1 per cent of rural African families can afford these highly effective nets, he said. They should be free. "Mothers and children are dying of a completely preventable disease because we are trying to sell bed nets. Let me urge the end of social marketing today."

Ultimately, Mr. Sachs declared, many of Africa's challenges could be overcome with more financing, "but we are not solving practical problems because we don't want to talk about money." Although official development assistance to developing countries has begun to inch back up after a decades-long decline, only a handful of donors have reached the internationally-agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product. Development aid to Africa remains far below the additional $40 bn required annually to achieve the MDGs by the 2015 deadline.

"We have the resources to save millions of lives and raise the basic infrastructure of Africa . . . to a level where Africa truly can become part of the global economy," he concluded. "We need to support practical investments on the ground." ■

Antimalaria bed nets: an inexpensive way to reduce child mortality, one of the Millennium Development Goals.

Energy key to Africa's prosperity

Challenges in West Africa's quest for electricity

By **Itai Madamombe**

On the outskirts of Accra, Ghana, business plans are only as final as the next electricity outage permits. In July, food tins at the Prime Pak canning factory were positioned on the assembly line, ready to be sealed before export. Without warning, the machines came to a screeching halt, leaving entrepreneur Cyril Francis standing helplessly in the dark. Thirty per cent of the consignment spoiled.

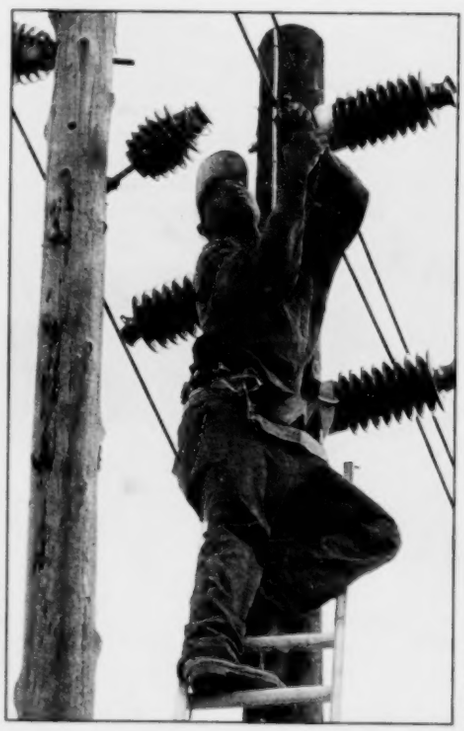
"The worst part is not knowing when the blackouts will hit. When you least expect it, everything comes to a standstill," Mr. Francis told *Africa Renewal* from his factory, based in Dodowa, on the fringes of Ghana's capital city. "It is so frustrating and damaging to business production, not to mention our reputation with people who depend on us to deliver orders on time."

The 36-year-old businessman has produced beverages and food for local consumption since 1992. Two years ago Mr. Francis expanded his business to include canning tropical fruits to supply Africans living in the UK with local delicacies. His vision to better the economic welfare of fellow Ghanaians seemed within reach when his business grew to employ 20 people. Lately, workers come and go with the electricity. His best hope, he said, is purchasing a small power generator from abroad to compensate for the shortfall. Priced at about US$18,000, it is an investment few can afford.

Blackouts are routine in almost all West African countries. The bulk of power plants and transmission facilities were built in the 1950s and 1960s. Little investment and maintenance has left the infrastructure creaking at the seams. Nigeria, a prime example, operates at one-third of its installed capacity due to aging equipment.

During droughts, countries that depend on hydroelectricity ration power to relieve generators, transformers and cables — such was the case with Ghana in the late 1990s. Wars have left equipment damaged and transmission lines cut. A large portion of Liberia's generation and distribution infrastructure was damaged or destroyed during its long civil war and the national electricity company estimates it will cost more than $107 mn and take over five years to fully restore the system. Sierra Leone's Bumbuna hydroelectric project was nearly complete when civil war disrupted construction.

"In this part of the world, when governments talk of infrastructural development, they are mostly thinking of building a road somewhere. Electricity is considered a luxury commodity," Mr. Francis stated, noting that while policymakers all seem to agree that energy is crucial to a viable economy, they seem unwilling to match that rhetoric with financial commitment. "Things are changing for the better, but at a painfully slow pace."



World Bank - Eric Miller

Repairing an electric power line in Mozambique.

Need to invest in infrastructure

According to Africa's own development blueprint, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), infrastructure is a pressing priority. Roads, water facilities, airports, seaports, railways, telecommunications networks and energy systems provide the vital underpinnings of any prosperous economy.

It is estimated that no more than 20 per cent, and in some countries as little as 5 per cent, of the population in Africa (excluding South Africa and Egypt) has direct access to electricity. This figure falls to 2 per cent in rural areas. Demand is expected to grow by about 5 per cent annually over the next 20 years. It is critical, experts say, for Africa to build facilities to provide power to those lacking it, especially in the rural areas where the majority of Africans live.

"Infrastructural development is not merely about erecting giant structures, but providing vital services, such as power to increase commerce, business productivity and enhance the lives of poor families by giving them affordable energy for cooking, heating and lighting," Mr. Ini Urua, principal industrial engineer within the NEPAD Unit of the African Development Bank (ADB), told *Africa Renewal*.

The proportion of people in Africa still depending on inefficient traditional energy sources is higher than in any other continent. The dominant fuel for cooking or lighting in low-income African homes is wood or other biomass such as dung and crop wastes. Kerosene is also widely used.

The direct burning of these types of material damages health and has been associated with respiratory diseases and eye problems. In addition, land degradation and deforestation continue to worsen as families cut down trees for desperately needed fuel. Women and children spend

many hours in search of wood; electricity could free up their time for other activities. Electric lighting could also extend study hours for schoolchildren.

African businesses require affordable, reliable access to electricity.

Africa is endowed with resources vast enough to meet all its energy needs. Hydroelectricity is by far the single biggest source of electricity in a number of countries. The region possesses some of the largest water courses in the world — the Nile, Congo, Niger, Volta and Zambezi river systems. The hydro potential of the Democratic Republic of Congo alone is estimated to be sufficient to provide three times as much power as Africa currently consumes. This potential remains largely untapped.

Oil and gas reserves are concentrated in the north and west. By contrast, virtually all of Africa's coal reserves are in the south. Geothermal resources are largely in the Red Sea Valley and the Rift Valley. Much of Africa is well exposed to sunlight — solar energy could be particularly useful in areas far from national grids.

West African electricity

Nigeria, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are the largest generators of electricity in West Africa. Nigeria's major sources of energy are petroleum, natural gas and hydroelectricity. Although the country exports electricity to neighbours, only a small portion of rural households in Nigeria are electrified. Ghana primarily relies on hydropower from its Akosombo Dam, on the Volta River about 80 kilometres upstream from the coast. Ghana supplies Benin and Togo with the majority of their electricity. In Côte d'Ivoire, thermal generating facilities powered primarily by oil and gas provide the majority of electricity. Countries connected to the Ivorian grid include Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin and Togo.

The three landlocked and sparsely populated countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are not particularly well served with energy, mainly because they are relatively poor and are at least partially situated in the Sahara. Energy development is also very limited in the small coastal countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau because of small economies and political strife.

"The pooling and sharing of energy resources would revolutionize the power sector in West Africa. Integrating power systems would enable countries to have a reliable and affordable supply of electricity."

— Mr. Ini Urua, NEPAD Unit, African Development Bank

Power through integration

Traditionally, energy planning has been undertaken on a national basis. But the cheapest energy source for a country might well lie just across the border. With cross-border energy networks, countries with surplus power could run their stations at optimum output without risking oversupply. Conversely, countries with limited generation capacity could access affordable power without building costly facilities. Power pooling also diversifies energy sources.

In October 2000, 14 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) signed an agreement to launch a project to boost power supply in the region. Under the West African Power Pool (WAPP) agreement, countries hope to develop energy production facilities and interconnect their respective electricity grids. According to the agreement, the work would be approached in two phases. The first involves countries already interconnected, including Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger and Togo. The second phase involves countries not yet connected: Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Countries will work to harmonize the regulatory frameworks that govern their electricity sectors.

ECOWAS estimates that 5,600 kilometres (km) of electricity lines connecting segments of national grids will be put in place. About $11.8 bn will be needed for the necessary power lines and new generating plants. This infrastructure would give the ECOWAS subregion an installed capacity of 10,000 megawatts (mw).

"The pooling and sharing of energy resources would revolutionize the power sector in West Africa. Integrating power systems would enable countries to have a reliable and affordable supply of electricity," Mr. Urua said, noting that such regional integration embodies the NEPAD spirit.

Projects galore

The major sources of electricity under the power pool would be hydroelectricity and gas to fuel thermal stations. Hydropower would be mainly generated on the Niger (Nigeria), Volta (Ghana), Bafing (Mali), and Bandama (Côte d'Ivoire) rivers.

In February 2003, the presidents of Ghana, Nigeria, Benin and Togo signed a treaty providing for a comprehensive legal,

fiscal and regulatory framework to build a joint gas pipeline. The 620 km pipeline is set to run from Nigeria's Escravos oil field, where it will capture gas flared by Chevron, to Ghana. It will also provide gas to Benin and Togo and may eventually terminate as far west as Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal.

Though the WAPP is still at an embryonic stage, ongoing joint projects between countries will further its goal to integrate the region.

Nigeria and the African Development Bank (ADB) signed a $15.6 mn loan agreement in December 2002 to interconnect the Nigerian Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and the Compagnie Electrique du Benin (CEB) networks. CEB is the electricity transmission company for Benin and Togo. NEPA is planning a 330 kilovolt line from Nigeria to Benin as part of a larger West African integration also involving Niger and Togo. Work began in early 2003 on a project to connect portions of Niger to Nigeria's electricity grid. Under the project, three separate networks would be built at an estimated total cost of $16 mn. The imported power will be much cheaper than the domestically oil-generated electricity currently consumed.

Only 2 per cent of Africa's rural people are connected to national power grids.

Ghana has plans to build an additional hydroelectric project on the Black Volta River. The $700 mn Bui project would have a generation capacity of 400 mw. In addition to increasing the domestic electricity supply, power generated from Bui could be exported to Burkina Faso, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. A second facility, located on the Pra River, would have a total generating capacity of 125 mw.

Mali, Mauritania and Senegal completed construction of the Manantali Dam in 1997. The Manantali includes a 200 mw power station and a 1,300 km network of transmission lines to the capitals of Mali (Bamako), Mauritania (Nouakchott) and Senegal (Dakar). Cost overruns, coupled with political tensions between Mauritania and Senegal, initially stalled construction. Manantali's generating facilities came online in December 2001, supplying power to Mali's grid. Senegal connected its power grid to Manantali in July 2002 and Mauritania in November of that year.

The energy ministers of Togo and Benin agreed in February 2004 to enhance cooperation in building a hydroelectric plant at Adjaralla, on the southern Togo-Benin border. In the late 1990s, both countries were plunged into crippling power shortages when Ghana, their main source of electricity, was forced to cut supply by 50 per cent owing to a severe drought that affected the Akosombo hydroelectric facilities.

Growing demands for power have prompted Burkina Faso to seek to import electricity from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire.

A power line connecting the city of Ferkessedougou in northern Côte d'Ivoire with the Burkinabè capital, Ouagadougou, is expected to begin operations in 2005. Burkina Faso employs diesel generators to produce electricity, but high production costs prompted the government to begin interconnecting its grid with those of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to import additional electricity requirements.

Major challenges

Rural electrification raises a number of issues for African governments. Many rural communities have low population densities and are situated in remote locations. Connecting them to a national grid can be costly and often impractical. Alternatives include wind power, solar power and small diesel or petrol generators. ECOWAS has drawn up a regional programme to use renewable energy sources — mainly solar energy, biomass, mini- and micro-hydroelectric projects and energy conservation.

All these plans call for massive capital investment, both local and foreign. Most governments cannot come up with the necessary funding on their own. Experts agree that private capital is needed. The private involvement, however, raises public concerns that even if electricity works at the flick of a switch, consumers and businesses may not be able to afford service at a rate viable enough for profit-driven companies to recoup full costs. More than 40 per cent of Africa's 600 million people live below the internationally recognized poverty line of $1 a day.

Assistance from donor governments is critical. Some donors willing to finance ECOWAS's WAPP project include the Agence Française de Développement, World Bank, European Investment Bank, West African Development Bank and the Nordic Fund.

Back on the outskirts of Accra, Cyril Francis confesses that it can be hard to live on hope alone. He has heard something about the criss-crossing of power lines in West Africa, but has not stayed up late at night wondering how many kilometres have been covered. "I am cautiously optimistic," Mr. Francis muses. "Here in Africa you hear many things and nothing happens. We are waiting to see what happens." ■

NEPAD MONITOR

Scientist wins prize for new African rice

Dr. Monty Jones, a plant scientist from Sierra Leone, became the first African ever to win the prestigious World Food Prize at a ceremony in the US farming state of Iowa on 14 October. He was honoured for his breakthrough work in developing the New Rice for Africa (Nerica), a drought-resistant, high-yielding, protein-rich type of rice. Nerica has been embraced by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as an example of the kind of innovative efforts that can help spur Africa's agricultural development and reduce hunger (see *Africa Recovery*, January 2004).

Mr. Jones shared the $250,000 prize with Prof. Yuan Longping, who developed the world's first successful and widely grown high-yielding hybrid rice varieties in his native China in the 1970s. The World Food Prize was created in 1986 by the world-renowned agricultural scientist Dr. Norman Borlaug, whose work contributed to the "green revolution" of the 1970s.

Noting that Mr. Jones led the pioneering work on Nerica in the 1990s while a senior research scientist with the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA), the official prize citation stated that "he captured the genetic potential of ancient African rices by combining African and Asian rice species, dramatically increasing yields and offering great hope to millions of poor farmers."

A delegation of a dozen African ambassadors who went to Iowa for the prize ceremony presented a statement indicating that the award honoured not only the efforts of Dr. Jones and WARDA, but also "the thousands of African scientists who are working hard to find breakthroughs to end hunger and poverty in Africa."

World Food Prize

Monty Jones, scientist who led development of New Rice for Africa (Nerica), boosting yields for poor farmers

African plan needs to 'speed up'

NEPAD has already made some notable progress in the three years since its adoption, African leaders acknowledged in late November. But more efforts are required to get concrete projects and programmes rolling on the ground. Gathered in Algiers on 22–23 November, a score of African heads of state noted that the initiative has so far placed African issues high on the international development agenda, prepared a short-term action plan for infrastructure development and launched the "peer review" process by which African countries assess each other's political and economic management (see page 14).

However, added Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the initiative must find ways to "speed up" the implementation of projects and programmes. "I am disappointed," Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade stated at a NEPAD conference held in South Africa a month earlier. "I have great difficulties explaining what we have achieved when people at home and elsewhere ask me that question." Although NEPAD is a plan of the African Union, the responsibility for working with financing institutions to identify and implement projects rests with the continent's subregional economic communities.

A cassava initiative kicks off

NEPAD, in conjunction with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, based in Ibadan, Nigeria, has launched a Pan-African Cassava Initiative. The initiative came out of consultative workshops in West, East, Central and Southern Africa and aims to help national governments formulate their own cassava programmes. The goal is to mobilize resources from Africa's partners to support research and development of cassava, the continent's second most widely consumed staple food (the first is maize). The root crop is easy to grow even in very difficult climates, and is widely cultivated by smallholders, especially women, across several of Africa's ecological zones. Despite cassava's role in Africa, there has so far been very little research into improving the crop.

Gender, civil society adviser named

Ms. Lithi Musyimi-Ogana, from Kenya, was named in October as head of the NEPAD Secretariat's newly created office on gender and civil society organizations. The move comes in response to earlier criticisms from women's rights and civil society activists that the African plan was initially drafted without significant public discussion and that it did not sufficiently incorporate their concerns. Ms. Musyimi-Ogana brings with her more than 20 years of experience with Kenya's Ministry of Finance, as regional director of the African Centre for Empowerment, Gender and Advocacy and as an adviser on gender and governance with the New York–based Women's Environment and Development Organization, an international non-governmental organization.

'NEPAD train is moving'

"The NEPAD train is moving, and the civil society in Kenya has decided to be on board," Ms. Grace Akumu, an environmental activist, told a conference on NEPAD and civil society in Nairobi in October. She urged participants to select thematic coordinators to work with the African Peer Review Mechanism and encouraged the NEPAD Secretariat, based in South Africa, to "practice an open-door policy towards information access and disclosure." The chairperson of Kenya's National Council of NGOs, Ms. Orie Rogo-Manduli, said that public debates about NEPAD should be extended to the slums and rural areas. ■

Beyond the ballot: widening African reform

Capable, responsive governments are a prerequisite for development

By **Gumisai Mutume**
Addis Ababa

Not too long ago, public demands for accountable and transparent governments in many African countries were often made at the risk of persecution, imprisonment or death. While repressive governments are yet to be eliminated across the continent, significant change is taking place in a growing number of countries. Civil society is growing and applying pressure for better performance, the media are demanding transparency across all sectors of society and governments are realizing that the days of coercive politics are numbered.

In the past, demands centred on the need for multiparty elections. Now that many countries have moved in that direction, the emphasis is on consolidating democracy — making sure elections are open and transparent and deepening reforms in institutions such as the judiciary, parliament and local government.

In Africa "there is increasing public demand for policies that foster democracy and development, for a budgetary planning process which is open and subject to public scrutiny, for measures that ensure a capable, proper and functioning civil service with an adequate level of remuneration," says Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a veteran Liberian politician and former UN official.

In a growing number of countries, she notes, citizens are calling for independent judges, effective parliaments, measures that address corruption and the devolution of power from central to local governments. "It is expected that proposed laws will be subject to public dialogue and debate before enactment and that those representing the people will regularly consult and seek the people's views," she says. In a nutshell, Africans are demanding what is known among development practitioners as "good governance."

Narrowly defined, governance means the exercise of political power to manage the affairs of state. In a broader sense, it can refer to the various processes relating to leadership, such as policymaking, transparency, accountability, the protection of human rights and the relationship among the public, private and civil sectors in determining how power is exercised.

"Leading voices across Africa and the common citizens of our continent are behind the demand for better governance," UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Executive Secretary K.Y. Amoako told the African Development Forum, a regular gathering of policymakers and government officials from the continent, in October. The conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the theme "Good Governance for a Progressing Africa."

Lawyers present their case before a Nigerian court. Judicial reform is essential for strengthening state legitimacy and effectiveness.

An increasingly active citizenry is championing the call for responsive government, said Mr. Amoako. The previous isolation of African civil society, media, youth and business is decreasing. "And with all this comes a rise in pressure, from the ground up, for performance and accountability."

A new era

A few decades ago, the picture was very different. Struggles for national liberation in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s gave birth to a post-independence era in which countries sought national sovereignty. However, in many countries ruling elites imposed fairly closed systems of government and single-party rule. Military coups and dictatorships became the order of the day. This period was punctuated by famines, natural disasters and corruption in government. Barring a few exceptions, those problems shaped the public image of Africa abroad.

But the last decade has seen the spread of democratic elections, generating hope for lasting solutions to the continent's problems. "Societies have started opening up," says Mr. Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, of the Swedish foreign ministry. Many countries now place great importance on unleashing the energy of the whole society for development, he says. "Coming from a member country of the European Union, I am particularly pleased to see that good governance is now high on the agenda in Africa."

The number of countries holding competitive elections in Africa quadrupled between 1990 and 1995. By 1995, some 38 out of 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa had conducted elections, many of them for the first time. Two regional initia-

tives, the African Union (a new continental political organization) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), underscore the importance African states are placing in good governance. All African countries have signed onto NEPAD, a development framework that stresses accountability as a prerequisite for economic progress. NEPAD states that "development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance." Under a NEPAD/African Union programme, 24 African nations, representing about 75 per cent of the continent's population, have agreed to take part in a peer reviews of their governance performance (see page 14).

But despite commitments to improving governance on the continent, the overall picture in many countries remains poor. Findings of a new ECA study on governance in Africa show that most countries perform badly in efforts to control corruption. Evasion and corruption in the tax system are rampant in many countries.

The study, *Striving for Good Governance in Africa*, assesses the performance of 28 countries across a series of indicators including democracy, respect for human rights, public-service delivery, corruption and media diversity. The report states that countries performed badly in the areas of efficiency of government services, decentralization and accountability in the civil service. Scores were also low for the effectiveness of institutions of all three arms of government: executive, legislature and judiciary. Across all 28 countries, respondents to the study gave the highest scores for indicators of political representation such as the credibility of elections and the freedom of political parties (see box, this page).

'Pseudo-democracies'

The recent African Development Forum conveyed a key message: in order to find lasting solutions to Africa's problems, a capable African state must be developed. This means building a state with functioning and effective institutions, such as courts and parliaments — one in which the different arms of government do not interfere with each other's work.

During the years of dictatorship and authoritarian rule, parliaments (where they existed) and judiciaries were severely undermined. But during the 1990s, a decade marked by the growth of multiparty political systems, parliaments began to assert themselves as separate from the executive arm of government.

In Mauritius, South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Benin, Botswana, Lesotho, Morocco, Senegal, Mozambique and the Gambia, citizens who took part in the ECA study considered their legislatures to be free from the control of the executive. In these countries, the parliament oversees public institutions to some extent, makes laws that protect citizens and exercises power over the national budget, notes the ECA report.

But the majority of legislatures in Africa still have a long way to go. Dialogue and debate in many parliaments are hindered by weak opposition parties. Often ruling parties are so entrenched that they use the state apparatus to hinder the opposition. Some employ a system of patronage, for instance, distributing state resources according to party allegiances. Some write election rules and procedures in their favour and deny opposition parties time or space in state media. In some cases legislation directs state funding only to major political parties, to the disadvantage of smaller ones.

So even without physical obstruction from governments, opposition parties cannot compete effectively, notes Mr. Larry Diamond, a political science professor at Stanford University in the US. He describes countries governed this way as "pseudo-democracies."

A report by the Southern African Development Community on governance and human development shows that in 1998, ruling parties in that region controlled large majorities in parliament. Elections in 1999 saw ruling parties in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa further increase their parliamentary majorities, while in Zimbabwe parliament has been dominated by one party since 1990. The report warns that the trend in the region raises serious questions about the long-term sustainability of parliamentary democracy there.

Lack of training

Some African legislatures are compromised by poor education and training among parliamentarians. In Ethiopia, for

Striving for good governance in Africa

In October, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) released its first major continent-wide study on governance in Africa, entitled *Striving for Good Governance in Africa*. It examines African institutions and human resources relating to effective government in 28 countries. The report assesses performance in areas such as political representation, corruption control, economic management, media freedom and diversity, and human rights.

Input was obtained from expert panels of about 100 people per country from all professional classes, as well as academia and civil society. The ECA also conducted public-opinion polls in about 2,000 households per country — rural, urban, rich, poor, illiterate and educated. The perceptions were then scored on an overall index of 0 to 100.

Some of the key findings are that constitutional government is getting stronger and more democratic and that multiparty elections are becoming the only acceptable means of transferring power. However, the police and military in many African countries still violate the rights of citizens, electoral commissions need more independence, shortages of manpower limit the ability of governments to function effectively and costs and red tape greatly hinder business in Africa.

The report identifies 10 areas in need of urgent action, including strengthening parliaments, protecting the autonomy of the judiciary, improving the performance of the public sector, supporting the development of professional media, encouraging private investment and decentralizing the delivery of services. In turn, donors must live up to their commitments to provide greater support, the ECA recommends.

To attain more efficient governments, African countries need to recruit and retain skilled personnel and tap into information and communication technologies, especially in key institutions such as the legislature and public services. The most serious challenge facing African governments is HIV/AIDS, the ECA reports. Strong leadership is needed to deal with the impact of the epidemic and more resources must be dedicated to fighting AIDS.

example, less than a quarter of parliamentarians have education at the 12th grade or above, reports the ECA. While a number of parliamentary training programmes exist on the continent, they are few and often underfunded. Delegates to the African Development Forum stressed the need for more resources to enhance the training of legislators as a precondition for strengthening parliaments.

However, training should not only be targeted at policymakers, said Kenyan parliamentarian Peter Aringo. There is also a need to intensify civic education of the electorate to allow citizens to participate in the parliamentary process. Mr. Aringo said the strengthening of democratic institutions to promote more responsive decision-making by those in parliament is only the beginning. "An alert citizenry is what makes democratic institutions and processes work."

The broader policy environment does not favour the development of state institutions. Economic liberalization policies have tended to trim the civil service and curtail the ability of the state to deliver services.

Often, African parliaments are modelled along the lines of those in former colonial countries. Many operate in a highly technical manner using English and French, languages not fully understood by the majority of the people. At the level of local government, some countries are beginning to use local languages to involve more people.

Opening up the legislative process to allow broader participation, such as by conducting public hearings and simplifying the parliamentary process, could make policymaking more inclusive. "The first step in the effort at achieving effective policymaking in Africa . . . is to begin by demystifying the policy process itself," writes Mr. Adebayo Olukoshi in a research paper for the Canada-based International Development Research Centre.

Seeking independent judges

Another area of governance in need of reform is the judiciary. Because court systems in many countries are underfunded and staffed by undertrained personnel, they are often overwhelmed by the demands made on them. In a number of countries it can take years for criminal cases to be heard, notes the ECA report. And as the old adage goes, justice delayed is justice denied. In Burkina Faso, there are only 300 judges serving a country of 12 million people — one judge for every 40,000 people.

But perhaps the most pressing need is for an independent judiciary. On paper, the constitutions of most countries uphold the independence of the judiciary, but in reality courts are not free from interference by political leaders. There are exceptions. In Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda, the judiciary is considered to be largely independent from other branches of government, the ECA reports. But in most countries the role of the executive in the hiring and firing of judges remains pivotal.

"So long as judges are appointed, paid, promoted or removed from office by persons or institutions controlled directly or indirectly by the executive, the judiciary's independence may be more theoretical than real," says prominent Ghanaian Judge Akilano Akiwumi.

Judge Akiwumi, who serves on Botswana's Court of Appeal and currently heads a panel investing corruption among judges in Kenya's Court of Appeal, says that in many African Commonwealth countries the independence of judges is protected because they are not employed as ordinary civil servants but are paid out of independent funds. In Uganda, for example, a special fund pays the salaries of independent officials, including the auditor general, thus preventing parliament from deliberating on the remuneration of judges. To limit the influence of the executive in the appointment of judges, some countries, such as Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia, have judicial service commissions that recommend and hire judges.

However, the situation is different in many former French colonies, where judges, especially in the higher courts and constitutional tribunals, are directly appointed by governments. Usually the highest court in the land determines the legality of constitutional provisions. Under the system adopted in former British colonies, only judges sit on such courts or constitutional organs, unlike in former French colonies. "In certain francophone African countries constitutional control has been entrusted to a body which is completely and officially political," says Judge Akiwumi. For instance, the Constitutional Council in the Central African Republic is headed by the minister of justice, with one assistant appointed by the head of state and another by parliament. The term of the court corresponds with that of a parliamentary session. In some francophone countries, appointees to the constitutional courts are not required to be judges.

Strengthening local government

Another government institution whose reform could radically transform the governance environment is local government. In recent years, decentralization — the devolution of power from central to local government — has been increasingly viewed as an effective means of promoting development and democracy at the local level. Development planners believe that decentralization improves service delivery, as it enables local people to influence decisions that affect them. Decentralization of government also brings politicians and policymakers closer to clients and, at least in theory, enhances accountability.

However, the existence of local government does not necessarily translate into democracy. In some cases officials are appointed rather than elected. Many do not generate their own revenue, but depend on central governments, giving real power to those who fund them.

Lately, aid agencies in Africa have been increasingly emphasizing local participation in their programmes. Countries that stress broader participation tend to get more support. Also, the growth of civil society groups and non-governmental organizations in Africa is presenting a new counterweight to the powers of central governments. Some of them developed out of tiny self-help associations created by people in response to the failure of the state to provide basic services.

So far only a handful of African countries have begun to decentralize. One of the early innovators was Uganda. The his-

tory of decentralization in the East African nation dates back to early post-colonial governments, but the most far-reaching measures were undertaken after 1986, when the rebel National Resistance Movement, led by President Yoweri Museveni, came to power. The movement argued that decentralization would introduce popular democracy in a country that had been destroyed by a series of authoritarian regimes.

Uganda's system is based on a hierarchy of local councils and committees at village, parish, county and district levels. The localized political structures were legally affirmed through a 1993 statute that was eventually incorporated into the constitution in 1995. The objectives of decentralization were to bring political and administrative control to the point where services are actually delivered, to involve local populations in decision-making and problem-solving, to reduce the cost of service delivery and to raise efficiency and accountability at the local level, notes Mr. Moses Golola, a professor at Bugema University in Uganda. The local councils perform tasks that were previously performed by government ministries, such as political administration, minor judicial services and the supervision of local development programmes.

"Local councils are composed of elected local people, who often hold personal stakes in the welfare of the area," writes Mr. Golola in a recent publication of the United Nations University on reforming African institutions. These local representatives often defend the interests of their local area against the whims of central government, he notes. A certain number of seats on the councils are reserved for women and a gender committee pays special attention to women's needs.

Early evaluations of the programme point towards success in parts of southern Uganda, where it is reported that local government councils have improved efficiency, accountability and transparency. However, the greatest impediment to local governments in Uganda is the lack of their own financial resources. This limits the extent to which local leaders can deliver on their promises and often results in interference from central government. Also, in areas where local structures are dominated by corrupt politicians or elites with allegiances higher up the political chain, results have been less encouraging.

From rhetoric to action

In a growing number of African countries, the need to develop strong institutions of state is not contested. The challenge, however, is to transform political rhetoric into action. The need is particularly great when the broader policy environment does not favour the development of state institutions. Economic liberalization policies, adopted by most African countries since the 1980s, have tended to trim the civil service and curtail the ability of the state to deliver services. While there is now growing acknowledgement that past policies have eroded African state institutions, current liberalization programmes still emphasize lean governments.

Local government election in Nigeria. Stronger local governments could more effectively involve people in decision-making and provide them with services.

The majority of African countries continue to implement structural reforms initiated more than two decades ago. "The economic reform measures imposed by international finance institutions do not take proper account of social and political backgrounds of countries," writes Mr. Seyoum Hameso, an Ethiopian economist. "Since such programmes visibly intend to reduce the role of the state, they make it in effect incapable of catering for social services."

Often there are no mechanisms to deal with ensuing problems such as growing poverty and inequality, violence and conflict, which in turn further destabilize the state. And because the state is forced to impose unpopular policy prescriptions by the international financial institutions, "the state and its institutions are rendered even more unpopular," writes Mr. Hameso.

The challenge goes beyond simply holding routine general elections, filling parliamentary chambers with legislators from all sides of the political spectrum or devolving power to rural areas. It requires finding lasting solutions to the funding problems afflicting governments across Africa and reawakening states that are devastated by health crises such as HIV/AIDS and that continue to lose professionals to nations that can afford to pay higher salaries. African states will need to produce an educated and active citizenry to operate these institutions and develop truly independent, viable economies that do not depend on the dictates of external lenders. "In Africa, the challenge is not just to prevent states from failing," says Mr. Amoako of the ECA, "but to encourage states to succeed." ■

States call each other to account

New African peer review programme promotes rights, accountability

By **Gumisai Mutume**
Addis Ababa

Setting the pace for other African states, Rwanda has become one of the first to allow external oversight of its performance under a new continental peer review programme. Rwanda's assessment began in February 2004 under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), an instrument that seeks to promote democracy and accountability on the continent. "Despite the significant economic and social progress made in the recent past, Rwanda still faces heavy challenges," says Mr. Claver Gatete, a high-ranking Rwandan government official. Those relate mainly to the economic structure and poor governance, which contributed to the 1994 genocide, he explains.

Rwanda confronts insufficient or ineffective government structures, a weak public sector, high population growth rates and unemployment. It also faces a host of economic and social problems that make the country difficult to run. Rwanda witnessed one of the worst genocides in modern history when 800,000 people, mainly ethnic Tutsis, were killed by militias and armed forces linked to the government in power at the time.

The country is now under a new government and is rebuilding its national institutions. Mr. Gatete says that Rwanda has a lot to learn and gain from the APRM. Under the scheme, for the first time on the continent, African states will voluntarily assess each other's political and economic management. The review is open to all 53 members of the African Union and is a programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted by African countries as the continent's development framework in 2001.

The APRM "aims to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated subregional and continental economic integration," says Ms. Marie-Angélique Savané of Senegal, who chairs the Panel of Eminent Persons that directs and manages the APRM. She says the aim is to promote the sharing of experiences among countries and showcase outstanding examples.

Countries that agree to go under APRM review must conform to agreed values in four areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socioeconomic development. African heads of state and government endorsed the APRM in 2003 and so far, 24 countries have joined the programme. A team from the APRM secretariat carries out each review with the participation of the host country. The APRM team consults government officials, members of opposition political parties, civil society groups, the corporate sector and the media. It gathers relevant documents to prepare its final report and recommendations.

The APRM is "a self-monitoring and control mechanism to ensure compliance with the principles of NEPAD," says Mr. Kojo Assan, who heads the NEPAD directorate in Ghana, a country that is also under review.

AFP/ Khalil Senosi

Under the previous government, Kenyan riot police repressed dissent. Today, Kenya is among the first countries to have its human rights and governance records reviewed under the APRM.

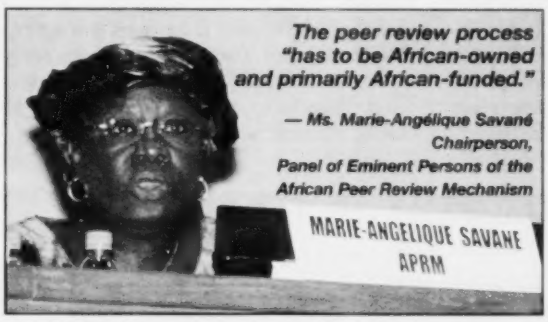
Key constraints

In October 2004, at the African Development Forum hosted by the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, representatives from Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda reported on their experiences and on the lessons they have so far learned from the exercise.

One implementation challenge in Rwanda is "consultation fatigue," explains Mr. Gatete. Already there are various programmes that require public participation, such as World Bank/International Monetary Fund poverty reduction programmes, government- and donor-led development projects and efforts to halt the spread of AIDS and corruption. The process of rebuilding national institutions in Rwanda also requires broad consultation. The country has so far set up a Human Rights Commission, a Unity and Reconciliation Commission and an Office of the Ombudsman.

The APRM exercise is time-consuming, says Mr Gatete, requiring anything from six to nine months of consultations. It also is "expensive in terms of logistics required, preparation of workshops, conferences and meetings all over the country."

There are no exact figures on the costs of running a review, but expenses may include setting up a fully equipped secretariat to service national commissions, reproducing documents, translating and disseminating those documents, and conducting workshops and informing citizens. At the launch of the peer review process, member countries recommended that each participating state pledge a minimum of $100,000 to finance the programme while a long-term funding formula is worked out.



The peer review process "has to be African-owned and primarily African-funded."

— Ms. Marie-Angélique Savané
Chairperson,
Panel of Eminent Persons of the African Peer Review Mechanism

Africa Renewal / Jamina Mukira

Countries should also individually plan for APRM financing in their national budgets, says Ms. Savané. Development partners may also be engaged, but "this has to be African-owned and primarily African-funded," she told *Africa Renewal*.

A full APRM review takes place in several stages:

- In preparation for the review, a particular country's national commission carries out a self-assessment based on a questionnaire from the APRM secretariat and drafts a national programme of action.
- An APRM team visits the country and consults government officials, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, the media, trade unions and others.
- A country report is prepared by the APRM team and discussed with the government.
- The country report is submitted to a committee of participating heads of state for consideration and recommendations.
- The country implements the programme of action.

If a country is willing to correct its shortcomings, other African countries and donor nations are encouraged to assist. If the political will is lacking, other states try and persuade it to comply through dialogue. However, if that fails, collective action will be taken and participating heads of state will alert the particular government on the measures they intend to take.

Not another donor condition

Kenya's Planning and Development Minister Peter Anyang' Nyong'o stressed that it is important at the outset to define what the APRM is and what it is not, what it aims to achieve and the context within which it functions. This would counter the "various forms of scepticism around the APRM," Mr. Anyang' Nyong'o told the ECA conference. At the meeting, the Zimbabwean delegation was infuriated by references from donor nations that if African countries were serious about the APRM, they should use the mechanism to promote good governance in that country. The APRM review "is not a donor condition," noted Mr. Anyang' Nyong'o. "It is not there to satisfy the 'please donors' syndrome. And it is not a process to punish wrongdoers, however they may be perceived by whomever."

In Ghana, when the process of implementing the APRM began, there was also a need to dispel "any erroneous impression that the review would affect only the executive arm of government," said Mr. Kojo Assan. It was therefore important to inform people that all the three arms of government — the executive, legislature and judiciary — would be reviewed. In addition, the public was told that independent institutions such as the Electoral Commission and the Commission on Human Rights, civil society organizations and the private sector would also be assessed. "The review process is thus national in character, and as such, a country assessment of the state of governance in Ghana in its entirety," he says. "The success of the APRM process is premised on the open participation by all in the process."

The success of the programme will also depend on the ability of countries to implement it fully, say Mr. Ravi Kanbur, a former World Bank economic adviser and now professor of world affairs and economics at Cornell University in the US, in a paper on the APRM. For each of the four areas — democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socioeconomic development — there is a list of about 100 indicators, standards and criteria used to collate surveys. "Even allowing for some repetition and the initial attempt at comprehensiveness, there is a sense in which this list is too long to implement competently," writes Mr. Kanbur. He suggests that the areas covered be limited, at least initially, to democracy and political governance, "to ensure that the whole effort does not sink under its own weight."

Civil society involvement

The success of the programme will also rest on the quality of the APRM secretariat and the technical skills of its staff and individual country assessment teams. In addition, observers stress that the independence of the APRM is paramount and any suggestion of outside influence on the reviewers would undermine its integrity. To some extent, the independence of the APRM relies on the personal authority of the APRM Panel. The current panel is composed of distinguished Africans including Mrs. Graça Machel of Mozambique, Prof. Adebayo Adedeji of Nigeria and Mr. Chris Stals of South Africa.

Another major test for success will be civil society participation. The process would benefit from a vibrant civil society dialogue and a wide range of reviews conducted by various sectors of society, says Mr. Kanbur. As part of the APRM process, notes Mr. Kanbur, NEPAD should "set aside significant resources to allow civil society in the reviewed country to do assessments of its own and to critique the APRM assessment." ■

Sexual violence, an 'invisible war crime'

Sierra Leone Truth Commission condemns abuse, discrimination

from page 1

Her ordeal — both during and after the war — echoes the stories of hundreds of other women and girls who testified or submitted statements to Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Created out of Sierra Leone's peace process, the commission was mandated to establish an impartial record of the abuses that occurred in the war, as a step towards achieving national reconciliation.

Women and girls who were kidnapped or raped or suffered other abuses such as amputations, have had difficulties reintegrating into their families and communities.

AMNA Photos - Eric Miller

Early in their efforts, however, commission investigators found that gathering information specifically about sexual violence was not easy. In Sierra Leone, as in many other countries, women and girls confront social taboos against speaking publicly about rape and other sexual violence. They are stigmatized in their own communities when they admit they have been sexually abused.

To help break through such barriers, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) intervened with advice, training and other support for TRC staff and especially for the women themselves. UNIFEM's work before and during the evidence-gathering process, in collaboration with local civil society organizations, played an important role in making it possible for so many women to break their silence and for the commission's final report to place such a strong spotlight on the horrific crimes perpetrated against women.

As a result, the TRC hearings helped bring to light Sierra Leone's "invisible war crime," as Ms. Binaifer Nowrojee of the Coalition for Women's Human Rights in Conflict Situations termed the problem in her own testimony. The Kenyan women's rights advocate worked closely with UNIFEM in highlighting the issue in Sierra Leone, as she had in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

A weapon of war

The Sierra Leone civil war was known internationally for its horrific atrocities — especially the widespread amputations of villagers' limbs. But until recently, little attention was devoted to abuses directed specifically against women. "Violence against women was not just incidental to the conflict," Ms. Nowrojee told *Africa Renewal*, "but was routinely used as a tool of war. Sexual violence was used in a widespread and systematic way as a weapon, and women were raped in extraordinarily brutal ways."

The commission's 1,500-page report, released in October, provides an excruciatingly thorough and detailed account of the atrocities carried out in the war, which officially ended in January 2002. Out of the 10,002 adult victims the commission was able to identify, 33.5 per cent were female. Among the 1,427 child victims, that proportion rose to 44.9 per cent.

All armed groups carried out human rights violations against women and girls, the TRC report finds. These included killing, rape and other sexual violence, sexual slavery, slave labour, abduction, assault, amputation, forced pregnancy, disembowelment of pregnant women, torture, trafficking, mutilation, theft and the destruction of property. While forced conscription was used mainly — but not solely — against males, rape and sexual slavery were committed almost exclusively against females.

Because rape and sexual violence were so rife during the war, the country is now seeing a sharp rise in cases of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, the report notes. According to the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), of the 170,000 people between the ages of 15 and 49 estimated to be living with the virus in Sierra Leone in 2001, some 90,000 were female.

The largest number of atrocities was committed by fighters of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the rebel movement

that started the war. The RUF "was the primary perpetrator of human rights violations against women and girls," the commission reports, and "pursued a deliberate strategy of violating women." More than 66 per cent of the 2,058 abductions of women and girls were carried out by the RUF, as well as 73 per cent of the reported cases of sexual slavery.

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council — an army faction that seized power in 1997 and was ousted the following year — also deliberately targeted women and girls, the TRC reports. The official Sierra Leone Army and an irregular pro-government militia group, the Civil Defence Forces, employed similar tactics, although on a less-widespread scale.

Some women joined the rebel forces, but many were abducted and then forced to carry out armed actions. Both women combatants and other female abductees were forced to take drugs — many remain addicted today. The TRC finds that "many women suffer a double victimization, in that they were compelled against their will to join the armed forces, and today they are victimized by society for having played a combative role in the conflict. They are treated with hostility and suspicion for 'breaching' both gender and sex roles." These women were largely excluded from the disarmament and reintegration programmes of Sierra Leone's peace process, which favoured men and boys.

Women who were raped also confront marginalization. Because of the social stigma that is still widely attached to rape, many have been shunned by their own husbands, families and communities — or obliged to remain silent to avoid being ostracized.

The Sierra Leone civil war was known internationally for its horrific atrocities — especially the widespread amputations of villagers' limbs. But until recently, little attention was devoted to abuses directed specifically against women.

UNIFEM support

Overcoming such hurdles posed a challenge to officials of the TRC, many of whom were men. The commission's mandate included looking specifically at crimes against women, but its personnel admitted at the outset that they had little knowledge or experience of eliciting testimony from women or conducting interviews with a gender perspective in mind. "Because UNIFEM's mandate was so close to what the TRC was expected to do," explains Ms. Florence Butegwa, regional programme director for UNIFEM in Anglophone West Africa, "we made a commitment that we would support building their own capacity, and offer them support throughout the process."

UNIFEM and the Nairobi-based Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights conducted a training workshop on gender-based human rights violations at the time of the hearings in 2003. The workshop focused on the impact of armed conflict on women and children, promoting gender sensitivity in handling female victims' testimonies and building the skills necessary to deal with victims and witnesses.

According to Ms. Betty Murungi of the Urgent Action Fund, "From our early experience with the Arusha tribunal [International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda], it became quite clear that if these issues of sexual abuse that happen during wartime and internal conflict were left to the devices of officials . . . matters that relate to crimes committed against women are often ignored, mischaracterized, or just completely under-investigated."

Sometimes traditional power relations threatened to impede the collection of information. "One commissioner said he went to a community where he was leading a team of recorders that were collecting testimonies. The women did not come out, only the men came," Ms. Butegwa told *Africa Renewal*. "When they were asked why, the men said 'We can speak for the women'."

"It was clear that it was difficult for women to come forward and speak publicly," Ms. Nowrojee says. As a result, "some of the women opted to speak behind a screen, some opted to give testimony in private." Ultimately, hundreds of women around the country testified or gave statements to the commission's investigators.

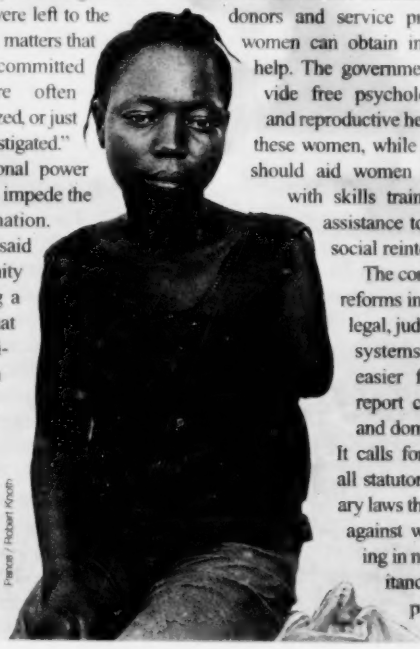
Ms. Murungi summarized the general attitude of the women who testified: "We want to break the silence. We want to say what happened to us. We want to understand why it happened. We need somebody to acknowledge that these things happened to us, to reclaim our dignity, so that this doesn't happen again."

Addressing 'structural inequality'

Also hoping to avert similar crimes in the future, the commission recommends numerous measures to help those women who suffered directly from the war, as well as to enhance the status of women more generally.

For women affected by the war, the TRC "calls on communities to make special efforts to encourage acceptance of the survivors of rape and sexual violence as they reintegrate into society." It recommends that the Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender Affairs establish a directory of donors and service providers where women can obtain information and help. The government should provide free psychological support and reproductive health services to these women, while relief agencies should aid women ex-combatants with skills training and other assistance to advance their social reintegration.

The commission urges reforms in Sierra Leone's legal, judicial and police systems to make it easier for women to report cases of sexual and domestic violence. It calls for the repeal of all statutory and customary laws that discriminate against women, including in marriage, inheritance, divorce and property ownership. It recom-



France / Robert Kroth

mends that the government campaign against the customary practice whereby a victim of rape is obliged to marry the rapist.

Besides expressing its gratitude for UNIFEM's role in helping women testify, the TRC also recommends that the UN agency participate in a variety of efforts to improve women's social status, including skills training, adult education, HIV/AIDS education, the abolition of harmful customary practices and leadership programmes.

The commission urges reforms in Sierra Leone's legal, judicial and police systems to make it easier for women to report cases of sexual and domestic violence.

The commission notes that the government "has not yet taken the necessary steps to eradicate structural inequality against women." It urges the president, on behalf of the current and past governments, to "offer an unequivocal apology" to women for their suffering during the war. To enhance women's role in decision-making, the TRC recommends that political parties ensure that at least 30 per cent of their candidates for public office are women, and that the government work towards achieving a similar ratio in cabinet and other political posts. The government and parliament should both aim to reach gender parity within the next decade.

A new Sierra Leone

The section on recommendations relating to women opens with an extract from an essay submitted to the commission by Ms. Chinsia Caesar: "I hope to see a Sierra Leone offering equal opportunities to boys and girls from the cradle to the grave. . . . In particular, I want to see a country where girls are not left out, but are encouraged to reach the highest peak of their potential." ■

Africans push to tame malaria

from page 4

force large numbers of people to relocate to high-risk areas.

Compounding these problems, the malaria parasite has developed a resistance to the most common drugs, especially chloroquine, the cheapest and most widely used antimalarial medicine in Africa. Since 2001, WHO has recommended that countries where malaria is resistant to conventional treatments switch to an artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT). Forty countries, 20 of them African, have to date officially adopted ACTs.

Derived from a raw material extracted from a plant, artemisinins are currently the most effective treatment for malaria, but at $2 for an adult dose they are 10-20 times more expensive than older medicines. But even at those prices, the surge in demand has created shortages of artemisinin likely to persist until at least March 2005, warns WHO.

Roll back campaign

Despite these constraints, efforts to eradicate malaria continue. In 1998, the WHO, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme and World Bank launched the Roll Back Malaria Partnership to coordinate international efforts. Two years later, 44 African heads of state came together in Abuja, Nigeria, to endorse the campaign's goal of cutting the incidence of malaria by half by 2010.

The partnership, which now includes 90 organizations, hopes to meet its target through rapid clinical case detection and treatment, wider use of insecticide-treated bed nets, more treatment of malaria during pregnancy and focused control of malaria transmission in emergency or epidemic situations. WHO notes important progress despite inadequate funding. WHO's *Africa Malaria Report 2003* notes that about 15 per cent of African children slept under mosquito nets and 2 per cent under insecticide-treated nets, which are known to be highly effective. Although these rates are far from satisfactory, the widespread adoption of mosquito nets in Africa reflects a significant change in behaviour, the report adds.

Hopes for vaccine

More good news came in October when, after more than two decades of effort, scientists announced that they may have found the first vaccine effective against malaria. Tested on healthy children between the ages of 1 and 4 in Manhica, Mozambique, the vaccine cut by one-third the likelihood of contracting malaria and reduced by more than half the risk of developing serious, life-threatening cases of the disease.

"Malaria is the number-one killer of African children," said Mozambican Minister of Health Francisco Songane. "We did this not only for the people of Mozambique, but for the people all over Africa whose health and development suffer greatly from this terrible disease."

If further clinical trials confirm the vaccine's efficacy, it could be available for widespread use by 2010. Together with bed nets and other prevention and treatment options, this may provide a real possibility for slashing malaria's deadly toll. ■

Africa needs 1 million health workers

Over the next decade Africa will need to train an additional 1 million health care professionals, says a study by a consortium of private foundations, health organizations and research institutes, including the World Health Organization. The continent will also have to find ways to retain more of the doctors, nurses, pharmacists and laboratory technicians it currently produces.

The report, released in late November, declares that severe shortages of trained health care workers is contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases in developing regions. It accuses wealthy nations of contributing to the crisis by creating a "fatal flow" of health professionals to Europe and the US. The study notes that there are more Malawian doctors practicing in the UK city of Manchester than in Malawi itself, while Zambia has seen 550 of the 600 doctors it has trained since independence emigrate to better-paying jobs abroad.

Darfur crisis challenges Africa, world

from page 3

partners." African countries have made the commitment to provide troops, yet have inadequate communications equipment, transport, fuel, medical supplies and financial resources to maintain a sizeable force on the ground. "There is no way we can do this without our partners' financial assistance," says Mr. Thiam.

Financing gap

For months, the international community has proclaimed its readiness to end the suffering in Darfur, and both the US and the EU have provided some assistance to the AMIS mission. Out of the total $44 mn required to maintain the current mission, the AU, as of late October, had obtained $31 mn in pledges, of which $26 mn was actually received.

Even that amount pales in comparison with the estimated $220 mn needed annually to support an expanded mission of several thousand troops. "There's a disconnect between the urgency attached to the need to deploy and the pipeline to finance this operation," UN Under-Secretary General and Special Adviser on Africa Ibrahim Gambari said in October. "What's actually missing is that flow of funds."

That view was echoed by a Western diplomat who spoke anonymously to a US newspaper. "We need more people on the ground, and if [Western powers] don't want to be those people on the ground, then we need to give logistical and financial support beyond what we are intending," he said. "The African countries are ready to get the job done. The question is: are we? Our rhetoric is not matched by resources."

Strict rules of engagement

In addition to limited financial backing, the AU mission is also operating under strict rules of engagement. AMIS troops are authorized only to verify whether the government and rebel groups are fulfilling their obligations under the Ndjamena ceasefire agreement. Their mandate does not authorize them to protect civilians, intervene in fighting or disarm warring factions.

Despite those restrictive rules, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda insisted that the troops from his country participating in the AMIS mission would not stand aside if civilians are threatened. "In my view," he said, "it does not make sense to give security to peace observers, while the local population is left to die."

So far, the Sudanese government has declined to consider a formal expansion of AMIS's mandate. It argues that it is improving security on its own and that foreign troops would only complicate the situation. The government has, however, agreed to an increase in the number of AU troops.

Rights and security

The AU's efforts in Sudan are taking place amidst sharp international criticisms of the Sudanese government's rights violations. The US authorities have characterized the situation there as one of "genocide," while others refer to it as "ethnic cleansing" or massive human rights abuses.

Food distribution to Sudanese displaced by the fighting. Recent clashes threaten to disrupt relief efforts.

In late November, the European Union (EU) proposed a resolution to condemn the atrocities in Darfur in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural issues. Led by African representatives, a majority of delegates voted to take "no action" on the resolution.

The African Group of delegates explained that while there is no denying the human rights violations, it did not agree with the "double standards" by which only certain countries are condemned. Moreover, it pointed out, the EU had failed to consult with the AU mediators, thereby detracting from the principle of African political leadership in resolving the crisis.

The UN Secretary-General's special representative for Sudan, Mr. Jan Pronk of the Netherlands, has pointed out that violations have also come from the rebel side. Following the late-November attack in Tawilla by the SLA, Mr. Pronk warned rebel leaders to desist from further provocations. "The international community is going to make you responsible for your actions," he said. Those who violate peace agreements "have to get the message from everybody at the same time with the same force."

In mid-December, two employees of the UK-based Save the Children aid agency were killed in south Darfur, apparently by SLA rebels. Further such attacks on humanitarian personnel could jeopardize international relief efforts, warned Mr. Jan Egeland, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. He urged greater support for the AU mission, noting that security on the ground is essential for saving Sudanese lives. ■

Investors start to eye Africa

Hurdles to productive foreign investment remain high

By **Ernest Harsch**

Usually, when investors look around for someplace to put their money, Africa is practically invisible. But at a time of uncertainty in global financial and capital markets — and with natural resources such as oil in high demand — a few are starting to give more than a passing glance in Africa's direction. In fact, inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) to African countries increased in 2003 by 28 per cent from the year before, from $12 bn to $15 bn (see graph).

This put Africa in the uncustomary position of registering the highest growth rate for foreign investment of any region in the world, developing and developed alike, reports the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The 2004 edition of the agency's annual *World Investment Report*, released in September, predicts that FDI flows to Africa will increase even further in 2004.

"The investment potential in Africa is huge," UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa Ibrahim Gambari noted in October. "The rates of return on investment in Africa are possibly the highest in the world." However, both foreign and domestic investors face many obstacles in most African countries, he added, speaking to a meeting on the private sector and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the continental development framework. "Supporting African countries' efforts to define and implement policies that can create an enabling environment for investment is therefore a top priority for the NEPAD initiative."

Though growing modestly, flows of foreign investment to Africa are still minuscule in relation to global FDI flows. In 2003, Africa's share was just 8.7 per cent of the $172 bn received by all developing countries combined.

NEPAD argues that Africa will need to raise more external financing for its ambitious development goals through a variety of means, including increased aid, deeper debt relief and expanded export revenues. But it also recognizes that foreign investment must make a greater contribution if the continent is to achieve economic growth rates high enough to reduce poverty.

According to UNCTAD, foreign investment is already a major source of outside financing for Africa. In 1990, FDI inflows were only around $2.5 bn, lagging far behind official development assistance and other official flows. But as aid disbursements declined steadily for most of that decade and as foreign investment grew modestly, the gap has disappeared. In 2002, FDI inflows accounted for 46 per cent of Africa's total external resource receipts. Taking the annual average over 2000-02, they even exceeded average official net resource flows.

Rise in clothing industry . . .

The geographic distribution of FDI inflows within Africa was more "broad-based" in 2003 than in any other year this decade, UNCTAD also reports. Several small African economies, including in least developed countries, shared in the growth in foreign investment.

One reason is that more African countries are benefiting from the US's Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which provides duty-free access to US markets for apparel and other products manufactured in eligible African countries. In addition to foreign investments in a large clothing factory in Namibia, set up in 2001, new investments have flowed into garment manufacturing in Swaziland, Mozambique and Mauritius. "The biggest winner was Lesotho," notes the report. Lesotho became the largest African apparel exporter to the US in 2003, with about 10,000 new jobs created that year.

In 2004, the US Congress approved the extension of the overall AGOA programme until 2015. That makes it more likely, UNCTAD says, for foreign investors to expand their involvement in African countries and industries able to take advantage of the act.

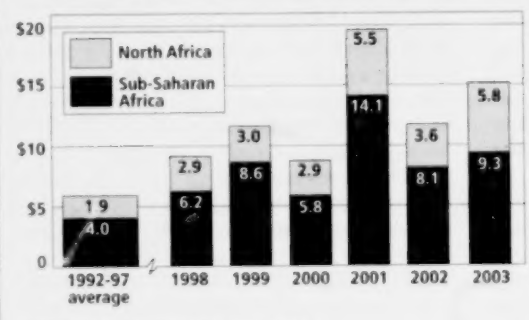
. . . but oil remains the top prize

Nevertheless, FDI flows to Africa are still skewed overwhelmingly towards extractive industries, especially oil. The bulk of the increase in flows in 2003 was accounted for by oil exploration and extraction, especially in Algeria, Angola, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Nigeria and Sudan. Out of the top 10 recipients of FDI inflows in 2002 and 2003, seven were oil producers.

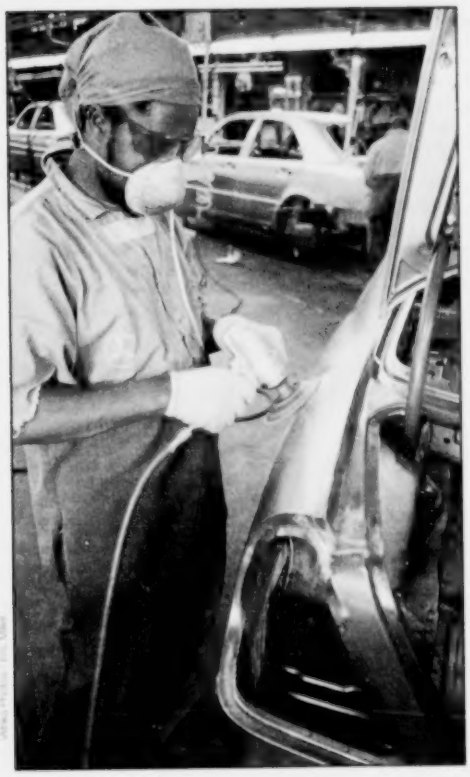
Algeria has succeeded in beginning to diversify its investment flows into sectors other than oil, including steel, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and telecommunications. But few other sectors in most African oil producers have been able to attract serious investor interest. Since oil, mining and other extractive activities generally do little to stimulate production in other parts of the economy, such investments have only limited development benefits.

As African countries seek to draw investors into productive sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, UNCTAD argues, they will need to further reform their investment codes and stream-

Foreign direct investment flows, $ bn



Source: UN Africa Renewal from UNCTAD data



Mercedes-Benz auto factory in South Africa. For many other African countries, it is difficult to attract foreign investment into manufacturing activities, leaving oil and mining dominant.

line cumbersome bureaucratic procedures for approving new investment projects.

Towards that end, UNCTAD has worked with nearly a dozen African countries to develop "investment policy reviews" that identify investor concerns, highlight priority reforms and seek to expand the linkages between investment and national development goals.

The reviews for Ghana, Lesotho and Uganda, for example, emphasize the importance of attracting new investments in light manufacturing and agro-industrial industries, while Mauritius, which has already been successful in those areas, is now turning its attention to high-value financial services. Ethiopia is looking to ensure that local enterprises can take advantage of foreign investment projects, either as suppliers or partners. Botswana, long a relatively attractive outlet for foreign investors, is now contemplating restricting FDI in a number of industries in order to provide better opportunities for domestic private businesses.

Red tape and governance

Excessive bureaucracy and poor governance also remain problems. Between 2001 and 2003, the World Bank conducted "investment climate" surveys of more than 3,000 companies in eight African countries. As cited in the Bank's *World Development Report 2005*, released in September, the surveys found that corruption is a top constraint. In Kenya, more than 75 per cent of firms reported that they had to pay bribes, while 70 per cent of companies in Zambia complained that regulations have been interpreted in unpredictable ways. About half of all firms surveyed did not have confidence that their national court systems would uphold their property rights.

"It is clear," notes Mr. Serigne Mbacké Sougou, a Senegalese tax inspector, "that if judicial rules can change at any time, if state governance operates on the principle of the abuse of power or if court decisions are slow or irrelevant, then FDI will not be attracted to a country. If corruption comes on top of all that, then foreign investment will turn towards other horizons."

Senegal is generally considered a good prospect by French investors. Mr. Jean-Louis Castelnau, vice-president of the French Council of Investors in Africa, remarked during a visit to that country in October. But even there, he complained, "decisions about investment always take a long time."

From AIDS to infrastructure

Foreign investors also cite Africa's broader problems as deterrents. "There is a perception that many countries in Africa are in conflict, and security issues prevent companies from going over there," observes Mr. Satoshi Tsuzukibashi, the Latin America, Middle East and Africa manager for the Japan Business Council (known as Keidanren). For example, during Algeria's civil war in the 1990s, all Japanese companies pulled out, Mr. Tsuzukibashi told *Africa Renewal* at his Tokyo office. "Now the situation has calmed down and the companies are going back."

AIDS is also a major problem for Japanese investors, says Mr. Tsuzukibashi. "Japanese companies have the concern that if they build their factories, the workers may not be around very long." In addition, educational levels are generally low in Africa, making it hard to find skilled workers. Finally, he concludes, basic physical infrastructure is often lacking or of poor quality, raising the costs of production. "Without the infrastructure and the development of markets, it is unlikely that investment will increase."

Mr. Wiseman Nkuhlu, head of the NEPAD Secretariat, also believes that investing in infrastructure is vital. "Yes, governance and corruption do matter, but they are not the only reason for the low rate of investments in Africa," he told a September 2004 business conference in Cape Town, South Africa. "The other reason is the cost of doing business in Africa. It is just too high, because of the lack of access to basic services and poor connectivity — hence the NEPAD focus on infrastructure."

The World Bank report adds that since private investment in roads, railways and other infrastructure is often quite limited, governments should step in to address such shortcomings. "Public investment in infrastructure can improve the investment climate," the Bank points out.

Business experts are increasingly coming to believe that improving Africa's prospects for private investment will entail more than simply liberalizing economies and reforming investment codes. It will also require developing strong and capable states that can ensure peace and stability, invest in areas that stimulate productive activity, raise the education and skills of Africa's work force and combat AIDS and other debilitating health problems. ■

AFRICA AGENDA

10-14 January 2005, Port Louis (Mauritius) — Conference to Review Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, organized by the United Nations. Contact François Coutu, tel (1-212) 963-9495, fax (1-212) 963-1186, e-mail <mediainfo@un.org>, website <www.un.org/smallislands2005>.

13-15 January 2005, Berlin (Germany) — Genocides: Form, Causes and Consequences. Contact Rohland Schuknecht, tel (49 40) 42 83 82 583, e-mail <namibian-war@freenet.de>, website <www.hist.net/ag-genozid/namibianwar>.

18-22 January 2005, Kobe (Japan) — World Conference on Disaster Reduction. Contact WCDR secretariat, UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, tel (41 22) 917 2759, fax (41 22) 917 0169, e-mail <isdr-wcdr@un.org>.

25-26 January 2005, Paris (France) — Biodiversity: Science and Governance. Conference organized by French Ministry of Research and co-sponsored by UNESCO. E-mail <biodiv2005paris@recherche.gouv.fr>, website <www.recherche.gouv.fr/biodiv2005paris>.

25-26 January 2005, London (UK) — Southern Africa Business and Investment Roundtable. Organized by the *Economist* magazine. Contact Thomas Crawley, tel (43 1) 712 41 61, fax (43 1) 712 41 65, e-mail <thomascrawley@economist.com>, website <www.economistconferences.com>.

26-28 January 2005, Gauteng (South Africa) — International Workshop on African Water Laws. A collaborative research project on plural legal systems in water management in Southern Africa. Contact Barbara van Koppen, e-mail <b.vankoppen@cgiar.org>, website <www.nri.org/waterlaw/workshop.htm>.

8-10 February 2005, Cape Town (South Africa) — Building Digital Opportunities through Public-Private Partnerships, on the liberalization of African telecommunications systems. Tel (44 20) 7253 5440, fax (44 20) 7253 9543, e-mail <uk.info@worldsummits.com>, website <www.worldsummits.com/digital_africa_05>.

25-27 March 2005, Austin, Texas (USA) — African Health and Illness Conference. Contact Matthew Heaton, e-mail <mattheaton@mail.utexas.edu>, website <www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa>.

6-8 April 2005, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) — International Water Africa Exhibition. Contact Jacqui Hepworth, tel (27 11) 705 1648, fax (27 83) 626 5882, e-mail <jhepworth@mweb.co.za>, website <www.ace-events.com>.

6-9 April, 2005, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) — The 6th Annual International Academy of African Business and Development Conference, sponsored by the University of Dar es Salaam. Contact Lettice Kinunda Rutashobya, tel (255 22) 241 0069/0500-8, fax (255 22) 241 0078/0084, e-mail <Lettice@fcm.udsm.ac.tz>; or Jan-Erik Jaensson, tel (46 90) 7866150, fax (46 90) 7866674, e-mail <JanErik.Jaensson@fek.umu.se>, website <www.iaabd.org>.

10-14 April 2005, Nairobi (Kenya) — 6th Pan Africa IFSW Regional Social Work Conference, organized by the International Federation of Social Workers. Contact Charles Mbugua, e-mail <mbuguacharles@yahoo.com>.

18-22 April 2005, Midrand (South Africa) — Renewable Energy World Africa 2005, an opportunity for investors to tap into the continent's new and renewable energy resources. Contact Chris Raubenheimer, tel (27 11) 516 4039, e-mail <chris.raubenheimer@terrapinn.co.za>, website <www.powergenerationworld.com/2005/renew%5FZA/>.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

5-7 December 2004, Marrakech (Morocco) — First General Conference of the World Academy of Young Scientists, sponsored by UNESCO. E-mail <d.malpede@unesco.org>, website <www.waysnet.org>.

12-14 December 2004, San Francisco, California (USA) — International Conference on Eradicating Poverty through Profit: Making Business Work for the Poor, organized by the World Resources Institute (WRI). Tel (1-202) 729-7600, fax (1-202) 729-7610, e-mail <PovertyConference@wri.org>, website <http://povertyprofit.wri.org>.

AFRICA BOOKS

Ageing and Poverty in Africa: Ugandan Livelihoods in a Time of HIV/AIDS by Alun Williams (Ashgate Publishers, UK, 2003; 272 pp; £52.50)

Towards a Common Defence and Security Policy in the Southern African Development Community by Hussein Solomon (Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 2004; 253 pp; pb £18.95, $29.95)

Villes en guerre et guerres en ville: pratiques humanitaires en questions, ed. François Grünewald and Eric Levron (Karthala, Paris, France, 2004; 392 pp; €26)

Histoire du syndicalisme en Afrique, ed. Gérard Fonteneau (Karthala, Paris, France, 2004; 176 pp; €18)

Exporting in West Africa: A Practical Guide by John O. Isemede (Malthouse Press, 2003, 404 pp; pb £22.95, $41.95)

Gender Budgets Make More Cents: Country Studies and Good Practices, eds. Debbie Budlender and Guy Hewitt (Women, Ink., New York, US, 2002; 150 pp)

Managing Common Property in an Age of Globalization: Zimbabwean Experiences by Godfrey Chikowore and Manzungu Emmanuel et al (Weaver Press Ltd, 2003; 218 pp; pb £14.95, $29.95)

The Human Rights of Women: International Instruments and African Experiences (Women, Ink., New York, US, 2002; 336 pp)

Developing Smallholder Agriculture by Richard L. Tinsley (AgBé, Brussels, Belgium, 440 pp; pb $49)

Au coeur des crises nationales au Rwanda et au Burundi: la lutte pour les ressources by Marc Rwabahungu (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, and UN Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva, Switzerland, 2004; 215 pp; pb €19.50)

Altermondialisation, économie et coopération internationale, ed. Louis Favreau, Gérald Larose et Abdou Salam Fall (Karthala, Paris, France, 2004; 390 pp; €28)

Tapping the Sun: A Guide to Solar Water Heating by Chris Laughton (Centre for Alternative Technology, Powys, UK; 20 pp, pb £3.50)

La nouvelle Libye: Sociétés, espaces et géopolitique au lend=main de l'embargo, ed. Olivier Pliez (Karthala, Paris, France, 2004; 240 pp; €24)

Multi-Habitation: Urban Housing and Everyday Life in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe by Ann Schlyter (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 55 pp; SEK100, £7.95, $12.95)

Agrarian Studies: Essays on Agrarian Relations in Less-Developed Countries, ed. V.K. Ramachandran and Mandhura Swaminathan (Zed Books, London, UK, 2003; 600 pp; pb £19.95, $29.50; hb £55.00, $75.00)

Contes des sages d'Afrique by Amadou Hampâté Bâ, (Seuil, Paris, France, 2004; 182 pp; €15)

Ethiopia since the Derg: A Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance, eds. Siegfried Pausewang, Kjetil Tronvoll and Lovise Aalen (Zed Books, London, UK, 2003; 288 pp; pb £16.95, $29.95; hb £45.00, $75.00)

Popularization of Science and Technology from Africa, eds. Mike Savage and Prem Naidoo (Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK, 2002; 267 pp; pb £13.90)

Private and Public Sectors: Towards a Balance, African Development Perspectives Yearbook Vol. 10, eds. Karl Wohlmuth, Achim Gutowski et al (LIT Verlag, Berlin, Germany, 2004; 736 pp; pb €69.90)

Reconstructing Health Services: Experiences of Health Care Reform in a Changing Policy Environment, ed. Kasturi Sen (Zed Books, London, UK, 2003; 256 pp; pb £14.95, $22.50; hb £45.00, $55.00)

Reinventing Order in Congo: How People Respond to State Failure in Kinshasa, ed. Theodore Trefon (Zed Books, London, UK, 2004; 240 pp; pb £17.95, $22.5; hb £50, $75)

Interventions in Smallholder Agriculture: Implications for Extension in Zimbabwe by Alex Bolding, Jeff Mutimba et al (University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 2004; 351 pp; pb £17.95, $34.95)

The Impact of HIV-AIDS on African Economies by Fred Ahwireng-Obeng and George Akussah (Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 2003; 84 pp; pb £11.95, $23.9.5)

The Road to A New Africa: An Essay to the African People by Papa Yalac (Random House Ventures, New York, US, 2003; 657 pp; pb $24.64)

AFRICA IN BRIEF

World hunger can be reduced, says FAO

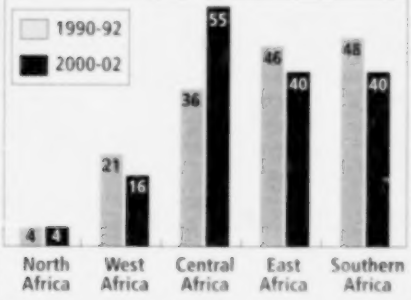
A group of 30 countries, 13 of them African, managed to reduce the percentage of hungry people among their populations by at least 25 per cent during the 1990s, providing proof that progress can be made in that area, reports the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In its *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004*, the FAO reports that even though current efforts to reduce hunger are not on track to meet the international goal of halving the number of hungry people by 2015, there is evidence that the goal is attainable.

Advances in the 30 countries, representing nearly half the population of developing countries, "provides proof that rapid progress is possible," notes the FAO report. Overall, the most significant change in trends took place in sub-Saharan Africa, where the rate of annual increase in the number of undernourished slowed from 5 million to 1 million between 1995-97 and 2000-02.

"Enough is known about how to end hunger and now is the time to capture the momentum toward that goal," says FAO Assistant Director-General Hartwig de Haen. "It is a matter of political will and prioritization." The FAO states that the resources needed to deal with hunger are small in comparison with the potential benefits — every dollar invested in reducing hunger can yield 5-20 times as much in benefits. The report recommends a two-pronged approach: improving food availability and incomes for the poor by enhancing their ability to produce, and targeting desperate families with direct and immediate access to food.

Over the last 10 years the number of the world's hungry has risen by 18 million people to 852 million. Hunger and malnutrition kill more than 5 million children each year, reports the FAO. ■

Proportion of Africans undernourished
average %



Source: UN Africa Renewal from FAO data

Conference strengthens Africa-Asia business ties

With trade between Africa and Asia expanding at an unprecedented pace, Japanese Prime Minister Junichero Koizumi opened an Asia-Africa Trade and Investment Conference with the words: "African winds are blowing in Tokyo." The 1-2 November conference, which emphasized the role of business in accelerating African development, was attended by Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, Nigerian President and African Union Chairman Olusegun Obasanjo, and public and private sector leaders from 49 African and 13 Asian countries.

Although Africa accounts for only about 2 per cent of global trade and foreign direct investment, African exports to Asia nearly tripled during the last decade, from $6.7 bn in 1990 to $17.2 bn in 2000. The next challenge, noted President Obasanjo, is to increase Asian investment flows. "With ongoing reforms in Africa," he said, "the continent represents a very fertile and rewarding ground for investment." Asian governments should increase development aid and technical cooperation with Africa to strengthen Africa's economic competitiveness, he concluded, and "lend a helping hand" to businesses seeking investment opportunities on the continent.

The conference was part of an ongoing initiative to strengthen African-Asian development cooperation that began in 1993 with the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). The third TICAD, in 2003, agreed to link the process with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). ■

APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Rachel N. Mayanja *of Uganda was appointed on 12 August 2004 by the UN Secretary-General as his special adviser on gender issues and the advancement of women, at the level of assistant-secretary-general. Ms. Mayanja formerly served with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization as director of human resources, and in 1999 was secretary of the Secretary-General's task force on reform of human resources management. Ms. Mayanja's UN career started in the then Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, where she joined the Division for Equal Rights for Women shortly after the first world conference for women. She has also served in peacekeeping missions in Namibia and Iraq/Kuwait.*

UNICEF: landmine ban a "moral responsibility"

With landmines killing or injuring thousands of children each year, the head of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, has called on those countries that have not yet ratified the 1997 landmine ban or ended production of the devices to do so. She specifically named China, India, the US and Russia. "Landmines are a deadly attraction for children, whose innate curiosity and need for play often lure them directly into harm's way," she told delegates to the first World Summit on a Mine-Free World in Nairobi, Kenya, on 2 December. "Countries have a moral responsibility to ratify the mine ban treaty and rid the world of these devastating weapons."

According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the overwhelming majority of the 15,000-20,000 people killed or maimed annually by landmines are civilians — 20 per cent of them children. With upwards of 300 mn of the explosive devices scattered across conflict zones in Africa, Asia and Latin America, mines are a major obstacle to development in some areas. A project to clear mines from a wildlife sanctuary and elephant migration route in Angola was announced at the summit, one of 2,200 mine fields known to remain in the country after decades of war. ■

AFRICA WATCH

GLOBAL SECURITY

Report highlights 21st century threats

To kick off an international debate on the world's new and evolving security threats, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan submitted a much-anticipated report to the General Assembly on 2 December. "I wholly endorse its core arguments for a broader, more comprehensive system of collective security," he said of the report, *A More Secure World*, produced by a high-level panel he appointed in 2003.

The report covers a broad range of issues, such as the need for a comprehensive strategy against terrorism, the rules governing the use of force, nuclear proliferation, rebuilding public health systems, combating poverty and reforming the UN Security Council to make it more representative and pro-active. "We cannot treat issues such as terrorism or civil wars or extreme poverty in isolation," the Secretary-General said.

The 16-member panel, headed by the former prime minister of Thailand, Mr. Anand Panyarachun, also included three members from Africa: Ms. Mary Chinery-Hesse of Ghana, Mr. Amre Moussa of Egypt and Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim of Tanzania. As part of his efforts to stimulate debate and reflection on the report's 101 recommendations, Mr. Annan briefed the General Assembly's Africa Group on 13 December. The full text of the report is available at the website <*www.un.org/secureworld*>. ■

Kenyan environmentalist awarded Nobel Peace Prize

Declaring that "sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible," the noted Kenyan environmentalist, women's rights and democracy activist, Ms. Wangari Maathai, accepted the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway, on 10 December, International Human Rights Day. "As the first African woman to receive this prize, I accept it on behalf of the people of Kenya and Africa, and indeed the world," she said. "Although this prize comes to me, it acknowledges the work of countless individuals and groups across the globe. They work quietly and often without recognition to protect the environment, promote democracy, defend human rights and ensure equality between women and men. In so doing they plant seeds of peace."

Getty Images / AFP

Ms. Wangari Maathai receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.

The first African woman in Kenya to earn a doctorate, the 64-year-old biologist gained international recognition in 1977 when she founded the Green Belt Movement to combat endemic deforestation and soil erosion. Nearly three decades and 30 mn trees later, the movement has transformed the Kenyan landscape and mobilized tens of thousands of people — mostly poor women — to protect the environment and become more active in economic, social and political life.

Although Ms. Maathai avoided politics at first, it soon became clear, she observed, that "responsible governance of the environment was impossible without democratic space." Her political activism soon brought her into conflict with the government of former President Daniel arap Moi — frequently landing her in jail and making her the target of official harassment and abuse.

Instead of silencing her, however, the authorities transformed her into a leader of the pro-democracy movement — which used a tree as its symbol. By linking struggles for environmental justice, democracy and rights, she said, thousands of ordinary Kenyans "learned to overcome fear and a sense of helplessness and moved to defend democratic rights."

Ms. Maathai's integration of environmental and human rights concerns was cited by the Nobel awards committee as a key factor in selecting her for the $1.48 mn prize. "Peace on earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment," the committee noted. "Maathai stands at the front of the fight to promote ecologically viable social, economic and cultural development in Kenya and in Africa. She has taken a holistic approach to sustainable development that embraces democracy, human rights and women's rights in particular. She thinks globally and acts locally."

Ms. Maathai is one of only seven Africans and 12 women to receive the peace prize in its 103-year history. Ms. Maathai was elected to the Kenyan parliament in 2002 and currently serves as the country's assistant minister for environment, natural resources and wildlife.

GREAT LAKES

Leaders pledge cooperation for peace

Eleven heads of state and government in Africa's war-torn Great Lakes region have vowed to strengthen regional cooperation for peace. In a declaration adopted at the conclusion of the first summit of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, held 19-20 November in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, the leaders reaffirmed a "regional and inclusive vision" for promoting sustainable peace, security and democracy. They pledged to crack down on cross-border arms trafficking and increase security cooperation against insurgent groups.

Held under the auspices of the UN and the African Union, the summit drew the leaders of Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Another half-dozen African heads of state attended as "witnesses."

The participants agreed to improve governance and respect for human rights, strengthen regional action to combat HIV/AIDs and other diseases and "build a unified economic space" for poverty alleviation and development in line with the African economic blueprint, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The leaders declared the Great Lakes region a "specific reconstruction and development area" and pledged to seek increased donor support for peace-building and reconstruction programmes. Amid signs that regional peace agreements remain dangerously fragile, the leaders agreed to establish an inter-ministerial committee to implement the agreed decisions and to prepare for another meeting in 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya. ■